



ADVISORY COUNCIL for the **EDUCATION** of **STUDENTS** with **DISABILITIES**

Annual Report
July 2010 – June 2011



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Introduction

According to state and federal guidelines this Advisory Council has responsibility annually to issue a report to the State Board of Education, the Governor and the State Legislature. Additionally, this report will be provided to the Tennessee Department of Education. The information contained in this report represents a period of a school year showing the progress made in programs for children with disabilities. It is the Advisory Council's intention to work with the Department of Education to ensure the provision of appropriate services for children with disabilities throughout the State of Tennessee. This is accomplished through...

- Reporting by the Department to the Council
- Council giving feedback to the Department
- Public input presented to the Council
- Experiences of council members, who represent consumers

Included as a part of the Division's activity, the activities of the Tennessee SPDG (State Personnel Development Grant) are reported here. The initiatives of the TN SPDG have been aligned to many of the goals of the Division of Special Education and the Advisory Council for Students with Disabilities. The TN SPDG has five initiatives—(RTI) Response to Intervention (Literacy), School Climate, Response to Intervention (Math), Early Childhood Initiative focusing on Autism, and Teacher Equity. All of the initiatives incorporate technology and family involvement activities into the PD framework. Additionally, the Response to Intervention (Literacy) and the Early Childhood initiatives are expanding upon previous SIG initiatives. The activities conducted between April 1, 2010 and March 30, 2011 are reported here as an integral part of the Division's school improvement activity.

Mission Statement

The mission of Tennessee's Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities is to ensure that all students with disabilities are provided with services and opportunities necessary to develop to their full potential.

Authority

Tennessee's Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities was established in 1972 and is required by Tennessee Code Annotated 49-10-105. This legislation states that the council "shall advise and consult with the Governor, the Commissioner of Education, the State Board of Education, and the Director of the Division of Special Education."

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), § 1412(a) (21), requires that the state establish and maintain an advisory panel *for the purpose of providing policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in the state*. Regarding duties, the advisory panel shall:

- ❖ *Advise the Department of Education of unmet needs within the state in the education of students with disabilities;*
- ❖ *Comment publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the state regarding the education of students with disabilities;*
- ❖ *Advise the Department of Education in developing evaluations and reporting data to the U.S. Secretary under Section 618;*

- ❖ *Advise the Department of Education in developing corrective actions plans to address findings identified in federal monitoring reports under this part;*
- ❖ *Advise the Department of Education in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities; and*
- ❖ *Advise the Department of Education in serving the needs of students with disabilities in adult prisons.*

PART ONE

COUNCIL GOALS AND DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES

The following were goals established by the Advisory Council for July 2009 – June 2010. The activities described represent actions carried out by the Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities and the Division of Special Education (DSE) along with the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) related to the goals of the Council. Data reflecting the provision of special education and related services throughout the state is reported with associated council goals.

Advisory Council Report July 2010 – June 2011

Introduction

Included as a part of the Division's activity, the activities of the Tennessee SPDG (State Personnel Development Grant) are reported here. The initiatives of the TN SPDG have been aligned to many of the goals of the Division of Special Education and the Advisory Council for Students with Disabilities. The TN SPDG has five initiatives—(RTI) Response to Intervention (Literacy), School Climate, Response to Intervention (Math), Early Childhood Initiative focusing on Autism, and Teacher Equity. All of the initiatives incorporate technology and family involvement activities into the PD framework. Additionally, the Response to Intervention (Literacy) and the Early Childhood initiatives are expanding upon previous SIG initiatives. The activities conducted between April 1, 2010 and March 30, 2011 are reported here as an integral part of the Division's school improvement activity.

Council Goal 1: Promote improved student learning / progress, including promoting inclusive educational services that meet the needs of all students, regardless of their abilities, and promote a sense of belonging and mutual respect for all students while affirming each student's individuality.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

In October, Cory Curl, Director of the Education Delivery Unit, reported to the Council that one of the Race to the Top's core ideas include utilizing data systems to help teachers teach, rather than just collecting data for reporting purposes. Veronica McDonald, TDOE, presented results of Indicator 5 (FAPE in the LRE) to the Council. Data reflected that Tennessee's state targets were met and exceeded.

DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES

The department issues numerous discretionary grants annually. These are designed to affirm student individuality and include inclusion, behavior, assistive technology, and high school transition. .

Between April 1, 2010 and March 31, 2011 RTI Literacy professional development was provided to 1,674 participants in twenty-four school districts across the three regions of Tennessee. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the districts received more than one discrete PD activity during this time period and thirty-three percent received four or more. Fourteen (14) of the school districts with which the SPDG RTI Literacy consultants have worked are in the initial stage of implementing RTI while nine are in full implementation. Only one district is at the innovation stage, and five are in the sustainability stage. Opportunity exists for the consultants' professional development and technical assistance activities to move districts toward fuller stages of RTI Literacy implementation. Additionally, UT Center for Literacy Studies and STEP Inc. staff provided PD to 249 parents and family members in 25 workshops held throughout the state.

The RTI Math initiative includes the development of two online RTI math modules and training school personnel in RTI Math. These modules are being developed by the IRIS Center, Vanderbilt University. After module development, the IRIS Center staff at Vanderbilt will train school and district personnel, as well as SPDG partners and designated state personnel on the content and use of the modules. The first online RTI math module "High-Quality Math Instruction: What Teachers Should Know" was completed in December of 2010 as the culmination of 900 hours of staff work. This module describes the components of high-quality math instruction: a standards-based curriculum and evidence-based strategies. It also

highlights several effective practices teachers can use to teach math. Since the module “went live” in December it has been accessed 2,307 times. The second module is projected to be completed by the fall of 2011, and PD activity concerning both modules is currently being planned for the late fall of 2011. The purpose of the TN SPDG Early Childhood Initiative is to improve early childhood outcomes for young children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) by providing professional development to preschool teaching staff, paraprofessionals, and families. The training is based on the Pyramid Model for Promoting Social & Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children developed by the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL). SPDG personnel provided Early Childhood professional development in a total of nine workshops and conferences for 135 participants. Additionally, during September 2010-January 2011, two surveys were distributed to capture the perceptions of pre-K supervisors of the PD needs of preschool teachers and paraeducators working with preschoolers. One survey was given to pre-K supervisors in general education, and a second survey was distributed to supervisors in special education. These surveys showed that special education Pre-K supervisors believed that ‘Working with students with autism was an important professional development need for preschool teachers and paraeducators. Other responses from special education pre-K supervisors also suggested that efforts to provide PD for working with students with autism continue to be needed. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of special education pre-K supervisors reported that at least one student with autism was being served in their programs. In addition, although eighty-seven percent (87%) stated that their preschool teachers had received professional development on serving children with autism, a large percentage (41%) reported that they had received no follow-up training. Also, only 57% of teaching assistants were reported to have had training in serving students with autism. Based on the large percentage of programs serving students with autism, the relative lack of follow-up PD for preschool teachers, and the lack of initial training for teaching assistants, efforts to provide resources for working with students with autism seem warranted.

Close the achievement gap so that more students with disabilities who are provided appropriate accommodations may receive a regular education diploma.

Through the awarding of discretionary grants, LEAs establish programs in areas of identified need such as: autism, positive behavior intervention supports, inclusion, mental health, and transition. Additionally there are grants awarded for therapeutic recreation (UTK), Project Brain (traumatic brain injury), assistive technology, and seamless transition/self-determination (UT Center for Literacy).

Council Goal 2: Promote expanded access to and quality of services to eligible students with disabilities (SWD) to better prepare them for transition into their future environments.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

In July, Mr. Fisher reported to the Council about the Transition Advisory Council currently being formed and invited anyone interested in serving on this council to contact his office. In October, Cory Curl, Director of the Educational Delivery Unit, reported to the Council goals and objective of TDOE’s First to the Top initiative. She noted that high school graduation rate is one of the top three priorities.

DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES

Gayle’s power point presentation recently presented to the Advisory Council includes numerous ways that the Department has supported transition to future environments. Some of these efforts have been going on for quite awhile and would encompass the 10-11 SY

Council Goal 3: Promote development and implementation of formative assessments that evaluate students’ knowledge in a manner that considers their individual needs and that provides appropriate accommodations.

DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES

Contact Joe T. Wood or maybe Ralph Barnett and ask them for a brief summary of Batelle's efforts in this area. They were providing formative assessment development and implementation in 10-11. They have moved to the L&C building downtown and not sure how to contact them. However they may still have state email addresses or Mr. Fisher may know how to reach one of them. Do you know anyone else who worked with Batelle? The Response to Intervention process is rooted in the use of formative assessments in order to intervene with students early and intervene in a setting much closer to the general education classroom than in previous years. A great deal of professional development has been done on the use of formative assessments and the use of results to drive instruction. The original IRIS Center modules on RTI focused heavily on formative assessment. Those modules have been presented to every school district in the state. The Division has also developed and conducted professional development on Standards-Based IEPs, which contains information on use of curriculum-based, skill-based assessments as a part of the IEP. During the July 2010 – June 2011 period of time, approximately 750 general and special educators received professional development at either the Annual LEAD Conference or the Annual Special Education Conference. First to the Top has a balanced assessment system proposed to be in use by the year 2014. A balanced assessment system contains more frequent measures, both formative and summative. During the period of time between July 2010 and Spring of 2014, the Division has and will continue to promote use of research-based, skill-based assessments. To make those recommendations, LEAs are referred to the National Center on Response to Intervention found at www.rti4success.org/.

Council Goal 4: Promote increased quality and quantity of personnel serving eligible children and youth with disabilities.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

In October, Mr. Fisher reported to the council that soon a teacher of core content subjects in grades 7-12, who is the teacher of record would need to be "Core Content Certified". He explained that the TDOE is encouraging districts to use ARRA or IDEA funds to assist teachers with taking praxis exams in order to become Core Content Certified. Council members provided feedback in support of districts assisting teachers with this. Cory Curl, Director of the Educational Delivery Unit, reported to the Council goals and objective of TDOE's First to the Top initiative. She noted that 3rd grade reading is one of the top three focuses for FTTT.

DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES

The State Department maintains 14 Special Education Licensure grants and 11 BASE-TN grants which provide funding for the training and licensure of sped teachers in TN. Teachers receiving these grant funds for their course work promise to pay back with teaching services in TN public schools.

The goal of the TN SPDG Teacher Equity Initiative is to ensure that low income and minority children with disabilities are taught by high-quality special education teachers at the same rates as other children. Objectives of the initiative include strengthening the role of special education in the "What is a Good School?" appraisal process and providing training for a cadre of special educators; creating a group within special education to study, recommend, and follow up on needed changes to policy and procedure for special education equity issues; and developing a publication to assist districts in creating local special education equity plans. In order to develop a foundational understanding of the issues surrounding teacher equity in Tennessee, the SPDG conducted a survey in the fall of 2010 of special education supervisors at the district level across the state. The survey asked supervisors their opinions concerning the recruitment, retention, and support of special educators of "high-quality." Sixty-seven percent (67%) of special education supervisors reported that their districts had difficulty attracting high-quality special education teachers and/or related service providers. From a list of teaching and support categories, they identified speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, and physical

therapists as the most difficult staff positions to fill. For many schools (48%) finding special education teachers was not difficult, however the supervisors indicated that they were not satisfied with the quality of the applicants. In addition, forty-eight percent (48%) of respondents reported difficulty retaining high-quality special education teachers and related service providers. When respondents were asked what factors, in their opinion, contributed to special education teachers leaving their positions, they identified three factors, from a provided list of sixteen, as the most frequent. Forty-five percent (45%) identified “Unhappy with current wages/salary” as the most frequent factor. “Lack of resources” and the “paperwork burden” were also frequently cited.

Council Goal 5: Promote adequate special education funding and improving procedures for allocation of funds.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

In July, Mr. Fisher reported to the council that Tennessee was one of two states which were awarded money from USDOE Race to the Top Fund. He answered council members’ questions with regard to how TDOE is restructuring in order to meet requirements set forth in the application to the USDOE.

DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES

The Division calculates the LEA funding formula according to the federal requirements located at 34 Code of Federal Regulations 300.705. There are two types of discretionary awards – to LEAs and to universities. All discretionary funding to a local education agency (LEA) is based on LEA improvement activities as they align to the Tennessee Annual Performance Report. An application must be submitted by the local education agency, read by a committee and rated according to need as shown by LEA scores per indicator. These LEA grants are for one year only. They are monitored yearly, an End of Year Report is required and the LEA may apply yearly. Funding to universities is usually a three to five year contract for services.

Council Goal 6: Promote improved state and local information management related to special education.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

In October, Jamie Kilpatrick, Director of IDEA Preschool Services, reported to the council on Indicators 6, 7, and 12, with regard to results of monitoring of early childhood education. His report indicates significant progress.

DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES

LEAS are notified of their standings in Special Education compliance areas through the State Report Card as well as Local Letters of Determination annually.

Council Goal 7: Promote enhanced communication among community, educators and stakeholders on special education services and policies.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

In July, Advisory Council chairperson, Paula Brownyard, reported that Tennessee was one of few states cited by OSEP for its statewide access to Advisory Council meetings. The council recognized member David Blier for his work with setting up web access to meetings. In October, the Council received a report from Paula Brownyard, Chair, that Tennessee’s Advisory Council was recognized by the Mid-South Regional Resource Center for efforts to draw more public input and has asked the Council and TDOE to conduct a webinar for other State Advisory Councils for implementing this in their states.

DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES

The director of professional development for the office of special education, disseminates approximately 100 to 150 correspondences a year on seminars, conferences, and other training opportunities. The Annual Special Education Conference is held each spring for approximately 2000 special educators, administrators, agency representatives and parents.

Additionally, the State website includes numerous links to special education information such as the State's Annual Performance Report, assessment data and procedures for eligibility, legal information and procedural safeguards, monitoring and compliance findings, etc.

Council Goal 8: Encourage implementation of school-wide positive behavior supports (SWPBS) and training for best-practice methods to ensure safety of students and faculty.

DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES

The state issues grants to Universities in order to enable them to provide trainings and technical assistance within LEAs in the area of positive behavior instructional supports (SWPBS).

In addition, the TN SPDG School Climate Initiative's main goal is to promote an integrated model of behavior and academic intervention for all children in Tennessee. The SPDG's vision is to develop collaboration with IHEs involved in delivering PBIS professional development and technical assistance in order to align its RTI efforts with the IHEs PBIS work in schools. In January, 2011 an online survey was distributed to all seven IHEs with which the SPDG collaborates. There were four important findings that emerged from the School Climate Initiative Survey. First, in 2011 IHE (Institutions of Higher Education) providers served 213 schools across the state of Tennessee, large numbers of which at least partially implemented interventions at one or more of the three PBIS Tiers. Second, though many schools utilized self-assessment surveys to aid their implementation and several IHEs had processes in place to evaluate schools' success with PBIS, only 56 schools (26%) were using an instrument to measure fidelity of PBIS implementation. Third, the IHEs collaborating with the SPDG believed that they were the primary or only source of TA and training in PBIS for the schools that they served. Fourth, IHEs were generally positive toward the idea of aligning PBIS and RTI initiatives.

PART TWO
STATISTICAL INFORMATION

NUMBER OF STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY

Both of the following two tables contain data on the number of students with disabilities ages 6 through 21 served by the local school systems. The first table shows a total number of students receiving special education services as of the end of the school year (by rank) with comparisons of the past four school years. Since it is a cumulative count, a student could possibly be counted more than once if they received services in more than one district during the course of the school year.

	School Year 2007-2008	School Year 2008-2009	School Year 2009-2010	School Year 2010-2011
Specific Learning Disability	43,576	49,256	51,681	52,892
Speech or Language Impairment	31,111	35,352	33,943	35,052
Intellectually Gifted	16,883	17,989	20, 831	20,681
Other Health Impairment	11,643	13,017	14,636	15,592
Intellectual Disability (formerly "Mental Retardation")	9,789	9,018	8,685	8,785
Developmental Delay	7,212	8,121	4,798	5,255
Other (Functionally Delayed)	4,535	5,135	5,479	4,955
Emotional Disturbance	3,791	4,563	4,451	4,619
Autism	4,014	6,257	5,368	6,227
Multiple Disabilities	1,929	2,258	2,163	2,300
Hearing Impairment	1,233	1,365	1,186	1,221
Orthopedic/Physical Impairment	943	921	800	788
Visual Impairment	596	629	600	596
Traumatic Brain Injury	301	355	331	334
Blind	160	190	174	175
Deafness	155	179	300	311
Deaf-Blindness	3	9	10	11
TOTAL	137,874*	154,614	155,436	159,794

This table shows a “snapshot” count of students (ages 3-21+) receiving services as of December 1st. This data does not contain duplications; however, since it is used in a federal report, it does not include the state-defined disability categories of Intellectually Gifted or Functionally Delayed. The federal reporting categories combine the state disability categories Hearing Impairment/Deaf and Visual Impairment/Blind.

	School Year 2007-2008	School Year 2008-2009	School Year 2009-2010	School Year 2010-2011
Specific Learning Disability	45,171	43,583	43,184	43,429
Speech or Language Impairment	33,897	33,584	33,802	33,475
Other Health Impairment	12,154	11,947	12,327	12,886
Intellectual Disability (formerly “Mental Retardation”)	9,328	8,373	7,927	7,600
Developmental Delay	7,060	7,139	7,391	7,957
Emotional Disturbance	3,702	3,609	3,446	3,382
Autism	4,019	4,595	5,419	5,990
Multiple Disabilities	2,098	2,167	2,197	2,179
Hearing Impairment	1,507	1,537	1,533	1,513
Orthopedic/Physical Impairment	894	864	818	815
Visual Impairment	783	746	744	731
Traumatic Brain Injury	309	277	305	296
Deaf-Blindness	3	4	9	10
TOTAL	120,925	118,425	119,102	120,263

**STATUS OF SERVICE FOR
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
October 2008, 2009, 2010 & 2011**

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES	2008	2009	2010	2011
Receiving Appropriate Services				
Receiving full special education/support services	118,255	118,450	118,523	118,601
Enrolled in private program at choice of parent and at parent's expense, with special education services provided by LEA	739	803	831	839
Receiving Less Than Appropriate Services				
Receiving some special education, but less than recommended service	10	8	6	11
Enrolled in school, recommended for special education but not receiving any special education services	108	109	98	99
Not enrolled in any educational program	116	123	112	116
Children Suspected to Have Disabilities				
Referred but not evaluated on October 1	3,701	3,752	3,765	3,769
Evaluated but not yet determined eligible/not eligible on October 1	1,822	1,844	1,817	1,832

Note: These numbers are as of October 1 of each school year and will not be the same as the End-of-Year figures.

Data Source: October Status of Service Report.

PART THREE
MEETING MINUTES

Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities
Approved Minutes

July 12, 2010
1252 Foster Avenue
Hardison Building Auditorium
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

Members of the Council in Attendance

Kathleen Airhart

Paula Brownyard, Chair

Samuel Cole

Chip Fair

Jeff Finney

Winnie Forrester

Janelle Glover

Kyle Hauth

Cynthia Higginbotham, Vice-Chair

Mary Johnson

Christine Lloyd-Burkes

Sebrena St. John

Shannon Taylor

Jim Topp

Darlene Walden

Members of the Council Not in Attendance

David Blier

Dawn Bradley

Chantal Hess-Taylor

Catherine Knowles

Beulah Oldham

Sharmila Patel

Cindy Storey

Tonya Watson

State Employees in Attendance

Bob Blair, TN Department of Education/Division of Special Education (TDOE/DSE)

Joseph Fisher, TDOE/DSE

Jessica Harbison, TDOE/DSE

Rex Kitts, Department of Children's Services

Mary Jane Ware, TN Department of Human Services/Division of Rehabilitation Services

Bill Wilson, TDOE/DSE

Visitors in Attendance

Lynise Parisien, Parent and Educational Advocate for The Arc

holly lu conant rees, Disability Coalition on Education

Loria Richardson, The Arc of Tennessee

Patricia Valladares, STEP, Inc.

Welcome

Paula Browyard, Chair, began the meeting by welcoming everyone. She then led the Council members and guests in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Acceptance of Agenda

The agenda was accepted as presented.

Approval of Minutes from January 12, 2010 Meeting

Without a quorum present at the April Meeting, a vote on the minutes of the January 12, 2010 was deferred. After briefly reviewing the minutes, the Council voted to accept them as presented.

Approval of Minutes from April 12, 2010 Meeting

The minutes of the April Meeting were also accepted as presented.

Report from the Chair

Paula announced two new members recently appointed to the Council. Kathleen Airhart (present) who, as the Director of Putnam County Schools, will be representing State & Local Education Officials and Chantal Hess-Taylor (not present), who will be representing parents of a child with a disability.

Paula then reported that a new website is being developed by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) for State Advisory Councils. Although only in the beginning stages, an overview webinar was held to introduce this new resource. The main goal is to provide states with access to resources and tools, such as annual reports and new member orientation, while also allowing OSEP to disseminate information to and from a single source. A few states were cited during the webinar including Tennessee for its statewide access to meetings. Although David Blier was unable to attend this meeting, Paula did recognize

him for his work getting this feature set up. The State Advisory Councils website is currently housed at tadnet.org; however, there is not a means for public input at this time. Council members are to submit any questions or ideas they may have to their Chairperson for submission to their State Education Agency. Further discussion of developments and a review of submissions will take place during a Leadership Conference in August 2010.

Public Input

There was no one present to address the Council.

Approval of 2010-2011 Council Goals

The Council voted to continue working on the 2009-2010 Council Goals in 2010-2011, in order to further monitor those areas, with the following changes and/or additions to the actions of the goals:

- Add Council Goal 1 (f): "Request TDOE to provide increased training of professionals/paraprofessionals in inclusive practices and review TDOE's monitoring of implementation of practices."
- Amend Council Goal 2 (a) to read: "Encourage TDOE to monitor and review best practices for how school districts are preparing their students with disabilities (SWD) in elementary and middle school to meet the rigorous demands in the TN Diploma Project in order to receive a regular education diploma and be prepared for the workforce."
- Amend Council Goal 2 (b) to read: "Encourage incorporation of self-advocacy/self-determination skills within the curriculum for all levels of services in special education, specifically seeking to increase inclusion and opportunities with peer mentors."
- Amend Council Goal 2 (c) to read: "Promote College and University Services program initiatives with the TN Board of Regents, the Tech Prep Consortium and college administrators, and include utilization of the College and University Disability Services program at the earliest opportunity on the high school level."
- Add Council Goal 8 (c): "Encourage TDOE to collect data on teacher and staff retention/attrition from school districts using SWPBS, if available."
- Add Council Goal 8 (d): "Encourage opportunities for parent and professional partnerships that inform and increase the understanding of programs such as SWPBS."
- With the additional actions on Council Goal 8, activities (c) and (d) for 2009-2010 then became Council Goal 8 (e) and (f). No changes were made to Council Goal (e); however, Council Goal 8 (f) was amended to read: "Encourage training sessions to address student/staff safety to ensure schools are complying with the Seclusion/Restraint Law."

A complete list of the 2010-2011 Council Goals will be posted on the TDOE/DSE website at: <http://www.tennessee.gov/education/speced/advisory.shtml>. Council members also volunteered to help monitor the progress of one or more of the Council Goals and report their findings to the group throughout the year.

2009-2010 Annual Report (Correction: This should read "2008-2009 Annual Report.")

This item was discussed under "New Business."

Race to the Top (RTTT) Update

Joseph Fisher reminded the Council that Tennessee was one of two states which were awarded money from the USDOE Race to the Top Fund. Of the \$501 million that was received, half will be distributed to local education agencies (LEAs) and half will be used by the TDOE for professional training and development. (Please note: The TDOE is now calling this initiative “First to the Top,” or FTTT.) The TDOE plans to restructure in order to meet the requirements agreed upon in its application to the USDOE.

A “Delivery Unit” has already been established, which Cory Curl will oversee. In order for LEAs to receive a portion of the award money, they must submit a “scope of work” to detail exactly how they plan to use the money in their district. These plans were reviewed by Ms. Curl and her staff and then forwarded to the USDOE for their final review. Once the plans have been approved and returned, the TDOE will begin distributing the money to the LEAs. It is possible the USDOE will also visit a few districts first to review their scope of work with them prior to granting final approval.

An “Achievement School District” has also been created and a national search is being conducted for a Superintendent. Gwen Watson has been appointed as Deputy Superintendent. A Finance Manager and a Curriculum Manager will also be appointed to the staff. The purpose of this is to assist districts that are consistently low performing. There are currently thirteen (13) schools in various districts that fall into this category and will become part of this new district.

Five other offices have been created within the TDOE: Great Teachers and Great Leaders headed by Barry Olhausen; the Office of Data Systems headed by Lisa Howard; Office of Standards and Assessments will be headed by Dan Long; the Office of Turn-Around Schools, which will be headed by Gwen Watson temporarily until a replacement is found; and the Office of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Education headed by Scott Eddings. The TN Early Intervention System (TEIS) is now part of the Office of Early Learning, which works with children ages birth to three (3) years old, headed by Bobbi Lussier.

Not all of the reorganization changes have been completely implemented; however, the TDOE is working to do so as quickly as possible and weekly meetings are being held to discuss the progress of these projects.

Transition Advisory Council

Joseph Fisher then spoke with the Council about the Transition Advisory Council, which is one of the stipulations of the TN Interagency Agreement. This agreement provides interdepartmental assistance between the TDOE, Department of Children’s Services, Department of Finance and Administration, the Bureau of TennCare, the Division of Intellectual Disabilities, Department of Health, Department of Human Services, Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities and Department of Correction for the provisions of services to individuals and youth with disabilities. These agencies are working together to determine who will appoint members, oversee meetings, etc. While still in the developmental stages, Mr. Fisher asked that anyone interested in serving on this council please contact his office.

Other New Business

Paula proposed a possible change to the Advisory Council Annual Report. The report contains statistical data including the number of students receiving special education services in Tennessee for that school year. Historically, this information has been taken from the End-of-

Year Data Report and is a cumulative count of all children served at the district level. This means that if a student received special education services from multiple school districts during the school year, then the student would be represented multiple times in this count. Paula explained to the Council that another count is also available which shows a “snapshot” of the number of students in the district receiving special education services on December 1st of that year. With this view, a student would only be counted once; however, it is for a federal report and does not include the Functionally Delayed or Gifted disability categories. The Council voted to keep the original table and also use the new information to provide more a comprehensive view of the data.

The Council then discussed future meeting dates and set a tentative schedule as follows:

- October 11, 2010
- January 10, 2011
- April 11, 2011
- July 11, 2011

Adjourn

Hearing no other new business, the meeting was then adjourned.

**Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities
Approved Minutes**

**October 11, 2010
Andrew Johnson Tower
710 James Robertson Pkwy
Nashville, Tennessee 37243**

Members of the Council in Attendance

David Blier
Dawn Bradley
Paula Brownyard, Chair
Samuel Cole
Chip Fair
Jeff Finney
Winnie Forrester
Chantal Hess-Taylor

Cynthia Higginbotham, Vice-Chair
Mary Johnson
Catherine Knowles
Sharmila Patel
Sebrena St. John
Jim Topp
Darlene Walden

Members of the Council Not in Attendance

Kathleen Airhart
Janelle Glover
Kyle Hauth
Flavenia Leaper
Christine Lloyd-Burkes
Beulah Oldham
Cindy Storey
Shannon Taylor
Tonya Watson

State Employees in Attendance

Steve Dugger, Department of Children's Services

Joseph Fisher, TN Department of Education/Division of College & Career Readiness (TDOE/DCCR)

Pam Fuqua, TDOE/DCCR

Melanie Hatcher, TDOE/DCCR

Terry Long, TDOE/DCCR

Nan McKerley, TDOE/DCCR

Bill Wilson, TDOE, Office of the General Counsel

Visitors in Attendance

Ned Solomon, TN Council on Developmental Disabilities

Welcome

Paula Browyard, Chair, began the meeting by welcoming everyone. She then led the Council members and guests in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Acceptance of Agenda

The agenda was accepted as presented.

Approval of Minutes from October 11, 2010 Meeting

The Council voted to accept the minutes as presented.

Report from the Chair

Paula announced that the Council was recognized by the Mid-South Regional Resource Center (MSRRC) for its efforts to draw more public input. The MSRRC has asked the Council and TDOE to conduct a webinar for other State Advisory Councils to discuss ways they could do the same in their state. No date has been set for the webinar at this time.

The 2008-2009 Annual Report is still being worked on; however, a final draft will be emailed to the Council members in the next few weeks. Once members have reviewed the final draft, a vote to accept or reject the proposed document will also be conducted via email.

Paula introduced a new member, Chantal Hess-Taylor. She is from Memphis and will be representing parents of children with a disability. Another new member, Flavenia Leaper, was not in attendance at this meeting.

Paula informed everyone that Beulah Oldham, who represents Institutions of Higher Education, missed the last few meetings due to a recent head injury. She contacted Paula to make the Council aware of the reason for her absences and to say that she is closely following the advice of her doctors so she can return to her duties as soon as she is able.

Jim Topp also reported about the recent passing of Sister Mary Mark Graf, a previous Council member. She worked in a residential home for children with disabilities in Germantown, TN and served for many years on the Council before retiring in 2002. The Council observed a moment of silence to reflect on her lifetime of service to others, especially children.

Public Input

There was no one present to address the Council.

First to the Top (FTTT) Goals & Initiatives

As it was not yet the scheduled time for Cory Curl, Director of the Education Delivery Unit, to discuss the goals and objectives of the TDOE's FTTT Initiative, Paula moved to the next agenda item. The Council will return to this item when Director Curl arrives.

Department Re-organization

Joseph Fisher outlined the current restructuring of the TDOE. In addition to the Commissioner of Education, the department now has two Deputy Commissioners. One whose responsibility it is to oversee the Race to the Top (RTTT) and FTTT activities. This consists of the Offices of Accountability and Assessment, along with three major divisions:

1. Division of School Readiness – Pre-K through 3rd grade and the Early Intervention System (TEIS). Bobbi Lussier has been appointed Assistant Commissioner.
2. Division of College & Career Readiness – 4th grade through high school, including Special Education, School Coordinated Health, ELL, Alternative Schools, Migrant Education, Homeless Education, teacher preparation programs, after school programs, professional development and curriculum. Joseph Fisher has been appointed Assistant Commissioner.
3. Post-Secondary Access & Services – This includes School Counseling, all Vocational Educational programs (now called Career Technical Education, or CTE) and Transition Services. Transition Services, which previously fell under Special Education, was moved along with the Office of Legal Services, which will now be a part of the Office of the General Counsel. These follow the TEIS, which was placed in the Division of School Readiness earlier in the year.

The second Deputy Commissioner is responsible for overseeing the daily operations of the department, such as personnel and fiscal matters. Mr. Fisher noted that the TDOE has been in contact with the candidates for governor while making these decisions to ensure that the initiatives and changes will meet with their approval, should they get elected. However, this does not mean there will not still be further changes to come.

Mr. Fisher assured the Council that he and his staff were working very closely with the staff of the offices now under his supervision to continue the current level of services received by students and to discover new opportunities for improvement. Teachers will begin receiving extensive additional professional development training as one major concern has been the implementation of annual reviews for teachers as well as principals. The training that will occur will help educate these individuals about the process and should minimize their frustrations. There are several districts that will begin piloting the new evaluation system next month and it will be completely in affect in the 2011-2012 school year.

Mr. Fisher also discussed the indications given by the USDOE that soon a teacher of core content subjects in grades 7-12, who is the teacher of record, would need to be "Core Content Certified." Previously, and currently, if a teacher is only teaching special education students and has been determined to be Highly Qualified, they could teach with a Special Education Endorsement and not have to be Core Content Certified. The State Board of Education passed a rule allowing any teacher of a core content subject (i.e. Math, English, Science) in grades 7-12 to take the praxis exam in another subject area to become Core Content Certified. Although there is no official mandate at this time, the TDOE is encouraging districts to use ARRA or IDEA funds to assist teachers in taking these praxis by enrolling in refresher courses or even allowing them to return to school to complete the necessary courses to receive a new endorsement.

Review State Annual Performance Report (APR)

The information being presented is a draft of the APR, which will be finalized and sent to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) on February 1, 2011. Once submitted, the information in this year's APR will be available to the public on the TDE/DCCR website at: http://www.tennessee.gov/education/speced/data_reports.shtml. Reports from previous years can already be found on the website.

Veronica McDonald, Director of Program Improvement, presented Indicator 5 -Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) -which looks at the percent of children with IEPs (ages 6 to 21) served (a) inside the regular class more than 80% or more of the day; (b) inside the regular class less than 40% of the day; and (c) in separate schools, residential facilities, or homebound/hospital placements. The data for the 2009-10 school year was obtained from Table 3 of the December 1, 2009 Federal Census Report. Data reflect that 62.33% of children with IEPs were removed from Regular Class 80% or more of the day in comparison to 59.15% last school year. The state target of 55% has been met and exceeded. Data also reflects that 12.64% of children with IEPs were removed from Regular Class less than 40% of the day in comparison to 13.24% last school year. The state target of 13% has been met. Children served in combined separate programs, which includes separate public/private schools, public/private residential schools and homebound/hospital placements comprise 1.75% of children served. This is less than the 3.71% national average which reflects that this target was met as well.

For 2009-10 all 136 school districts are using the statewide special education data system for reporting student level data. This consistency of data reporting provides for a high level of data accuracy as these student level data come directly from the IEP information. TN continues to meet the state targets relative to this indicator. Districts in the state generally provide a continuum of placements based on the least restrictive environment.

Jamie Kilpatrick, Director of IDEA Preschool Services, was introduced to discuss Indicators 6, 7 and 12 which deal with areas of early childhood education. He also introduced Melanie Hatcher, Early Childhood Consultant, and Pam Fuqua, Early Childhood Data Consultant, who helped gather the information to be presented. Indicator 6 - Early Childhood Settings - is not required to be reported this year. There is currently a national debate regarding the exactly what parameters are appropriate; therefore, although the TDOE has the means to collect the data, reporting has been put on hold for this school year.

Mr. Kilpatrick also reviewed Indicator 7 - Preschool Outcomes. This Indicator looks at the percent of preschool children with IEPs who demonstrate improved: (a) positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships); (b) acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy); and (c) use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs. Entrance and exit data has been collected from LEAs on a total of 1128 students who had received services for at least six months. The preschool children who improved functioning (combined categories of c and d divided by a+b+c+d times 100) are seen at the following percentage by outcome:

- A. Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships) = 91.7%
- B. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy) = 89.5%
- C. Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs = 92.6%

The number of preschool children who were functioning within age expectations (combined categories of d and e divided by a+b+c+d+e times 100) are seen at the following percentage by outcome:

- A. Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships) = 57.4%
- B. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy) = 55.7%
- C. Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs = 68.0%

Since this is such a new reporting area, the TDOE will continue to refine its data collection process and explore uses for the data once collected.

Mr. Kilpatrick then went on to discuss Indicator 12 - Part C to B Transition. This Indicator shows the percent of children referred by Part C prior to age 3, who are found eligible for Part B, and who have an IEP developed and implemented by their third birthdays. 98% of children referred by Part C prior to age 3 and who were found eligible for Part B had an IEP developed and implemented by their third birthdays. This represents continued progress from the previous fiscal year's performance of 95%, and represents significant progress from the 2006-2007 year performance of 47.10%. In addition, this year compliance monitors followed up with LEAs that were not compliant on this indicator.

Reasons most often cited for untimely IEPs were: scheduling issues between parties, snow days, rescheduling issues when someone is sick – often the child, and families that have moved, could not be located, changed their minds regarding evaluation or services.

Data from Tennessee's Early Intervention Data System was merged into a unified data table for this report and compared to the special education data services system (Easy-IEP).

Data submitted for FFY 2009-2010 has been verified by each LEA to increase accuracy. Work continues with the existing data systems in Part B and Part C to collect all desired data elements to continue and improve this indicator data.

FTTT Goals & Initiatives

Cory Curl arrived to address the Council and attention was returned to this item. Ms. Curl outlined the work that is being done to transform the State Department of Education and its relationships with school districts. She encouraged everyone to access the state's Race to the Top (RTTT) application (found online here: <http://state.tn.us/education/index.shtml>) and read the first two pages which sets forth a narrative of what aspirations the department has for the students of Tennessee. Within RTTT, very specific goals were established regarding student performance. This includes enhancing proficiency on state assessments as well as national education progress scores; increasing graduation rates and the number of students continuing on to post-secondary situations; working to decrease achievement gaps; and dramatically enhance the effectiveness of instruction. RTTT's core ideas include: adopting standards and assessments across state lines; utilizing data systems to help teachers teach, rather than just collecting data for reporting purposes; honestly measuring teacher and school performance to appropriately provide support where it is needed most; and funding for STEM – Science, Technology, Information, and Mathematics.

FTTT is currently focusing on three very specific areas - 3rd grade Reading, 7th & 8th grade Math and High School graduation rates. Once a comfortable amount of progress has been seen, focus will expand into other areas such as post-secondary enrollment rates and post-secondary success rates after the first year and completion rates to ensure that students are not only successful in their academic life but their lives beyond school. Ms. Curl assured the Council that she would provide regular progress reports and would welcome feedback and suggestions to help make this project as successful as possible.

APR Review

Returning to the APR Review, Bill Wilson, Director of Special Education Legal Services, was introduced to present Indicators 16-19. Indicator 16 shows the percent of signed written complaints with reports issued that were resolved within 60-day timeline or a timeline extended for exceptional circumstances with respect to a particular complaint, or because the parent (or individual or organization) and the public agency agree to extend the time to engage in mediation or other alternative means of dispute resolution, if available in the State. 99 signed written complaints were received by the division. 60 reports were issued. Of the 60 reports issued, 57 were within timelines and 4 were within extended timelines. 5 complaints were pending at the end of the reporting period, all of which were pending a due process hearing. 34 complaints were withdrawn or dismissed. 100% of signed written complaints were resolved within the timelines (including extended timelines) and the target was met.

Indicator 17 shows the percent of adjudicated due process hearing requests that were adjudicated within the 45-day timeline or a timeline that is properly extended by the hearing officer at the request of either party or in the case of an expedited hearing, within the required timelines. 42 due process hearing requests were received by the division. One (1) due process hearing request was fully adjudicated. 24 due process hearing requests were resolved without a hearing. 17 requests were pending at the end of the reporting period. 100% of due process hearings were decided within the timelines (including extended timelines). There were no findings of noncompliance. Target was met.

Indicator 18 shows the percent of hearing requests that went to resolution sessions that were resolved through resolution session settlement agreements. The Target for this Indicator was 4% of hearing requests that go to resolution sessions will be resolved through resolution settlement agreements. 16 resolution sessions were conducted with 9 resulting in signed written agreements. 56% of hearing requests that went to resolution sessions resulted in signed written agreements. Therefore, this target was also met.

Indicator 19 shows the percent of mediations held that resulted in mediation agreements. 36 mediation requests were received by the division and 10 were not related to due process hearing requests. Of the 10 that were not related to due process hearing requests, 9 resulted in agreements. Of the 11 mediations that were related to due process hearing requests, 7 resulted in agreements. 15 mediations were either pending or not conducted. 76% of mediations reached agreement within applicable timelines (16 agreements divided by 21 mediations held) and the target of 60% was met.

Terry Long, Director of Data Services, began with a brief overview of Indicator 8 - Parent Survey. Based on the study conducted in FFY08, it was determined that the two most cost effective methods of survey distribution are direct email to parents and mailing survey packets to School Principals for distribution to parents. TDOE worked with a contractor, East Tennessee State University (ETSU), to administer the survey. The two different methods of soliciting parent surveys are described below:

1. Direct Email to Parents: Parents were directly emailed and provided a URL to take the survey on the Web. Information from the state, in letter form, was attached explaining the survey. Additionally, parents could choose to print, complete and return a hard copy of the survey by US mail.

2. Mailing of Survey Packets to School Principals: School principals were mailed quantities of paper surveys, postage paid envelopes and letters to parents explaining the survey. School principals were asked to disseminate the surveys to students to be taken home to parents. (The accompanying letter provided parents a URL as an alternate means of completing the survey if the parent did not want to complete the hard copy).

This year a total of 29,653 surveys were distributed to parents. There were 5,478 survey responses with usable data for a response rate of 18.5% (5,478 / 29,653). Therefore, the state target of 96% was not met. More regarding this Indicator will be presented at the meeting on January 10, 2011.

Ms. Long went on to discuss Indicator 9 - Disproportionality by race. This Indicator shows the percent of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services that is the result of inappropriate identification. The Target for the Indicator was 0% of school districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services that is the result of inappropriate identification. One district was found to have disproportionate representation of students receiving special education and related services based on the application of criteria defined in this indicator. This district was determined, however, not to be disproportionate as the result of inappropriate identification. Therefore, 0 of Tennessee's 136 districts were found to have disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services *that is the result of inappropriate identification* and the target was met.

Ms. Long finished with Indicator 10 - Disproportionality by disability categories. Indicator 10 shows a percent of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories that is the result of inappropriate identification. The target for this Indicator was 0% of school districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services that is the result of inappropriate identification of students with Autism, Emotional Disturbance, Intellectual Disabilities, Other Health Impairment, Specific Learning Disabilities, and Speech/Language Impairments. 27 districts were found to have disproportionate over- and or under-representation based on the application of criteria defined in this indicator. These districts were determined, however, not to be disproportionate as the result of inappropriate identification, as described below. Therefore, in FFY 2009 through the examination of disproportionate representation data, 0 of Tennessee's 136 districts were found to have disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories *as a result of inappropriate identification* and the target was met.

Veronica McDonald completed the APR Review for this meeting with Indicator 11 - Child Find. Indicator 11 shows a percent of children who were evaluated within 60 days of receiving parental consent for initial evaluation or, if the State establishes a timeframe within which the evaluation must be conducted, within that timeframe. TN did not meet the 100% target for this year. However 96.25% maintains the progress that was made in the FFY08. In part, this progress is attributed to the implementation of the completed improvement activity requiring a more robust data collection through the state data system. Accompanying instructions and trainings consistently communicated the importance of these data and their collection. Training to LEAs was provided at the Annual Special Education State Conference and regional orientation meetings. Additionally, ongoing state data system technical assistance is provided throughout the year for all districts in the state.

Although there was discussion of discontinuing TDOE-granted extensions, it was decided to continue accepting for consideration and granting when warranted TDOE extensions. TDOE extensions were beginning to be aligned with the reasons for delay that were built into the data collection system this year. This alignment will continue in order to help streamline the process of approving extension requests. The number of extensions granted by the TDOE was 5. Only exceptional reasons for delay, beyond those outlined above, are granted extensions.

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Paula Brownyard was re-elected to serve as Chair. Cynthia Higginbotham was also re-elected and will continue to serve as Vice-Chair.

Other New Business

The Council then discussed future meeting dates and set a tentative schedule as follows:

- January 10, 2011
- April 11, 2011
- July 11, 2011
- October 17, 2011

Adjourn

Hearing no other new business, the meeting was then adjourned.

**Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities
Approved Minutes**

**January 19, 2011
Via Conference Call***

Members of the Council in Attendance

Kathleen Airhart

Paula Brownyard, Chair

Samuel Cole

Chip Fair

Jeff Finney

Janelle Glover

Kyle Hauth

Chantal Hess-Taylor

Christine Lloyd-Burkes

Sharmila Patel

Members of the Council Not in Attendance

David Blier

Dawn Bradley

Cynthia Higginbotham, Vice-Chair

Mary Johnson

Catherine Knowles

Flavenia Leaper

Beulah Oldham

Sebrena St. John

Cindy Storey

Shannon Taylor

Jim Topp

Darlene Walden

Tonya Watson

State Employees in Attendance

Joseph Fisher, TN Department of Education/Division of College & Career Readiness (TDE/DCCR)
Steve Sparks, TDE/DCCR

Visitors in Attendance

Sherry Wilds, Disability Law & Advocacy

(*The meeting originally scheduled for January 10, 2011 was cancelled due to inclement weather, therefore, this quarterly meeting was conducted by phone.)

Welcome

Paula Browyard, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and called the meeting to order.

Acceptance of Agenda

Without a quorum, a vote could not be held. The meeting continued with the proposed agenda.

APR Indicators

With a majority of the Indicator areas of the Annual Performance Report having been reviewed at the October 2010 meeting, Steve Sparks, Director of Professional Development, presented the remaining Indicators to the Council. The complete APR can be located at: http://www.tennessee.gov/education/speced/data_reports.shtml

TVAAS Data for Teachers of SWD Memo

A memo from Commissioner Bruce Opie regarding the possible inclusion of students with disabilities to the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) was then discussed. Currently, TCA 49-1-606 specifically excludes students with disabilities and the Office of Special Education has been asked if this should be revised. In response, the TDE will review the historical data on the performance of students with disabilities in terms of TVAAS to determine if using this data is a reliable and valid indicator of academic growth for these students before making a final decision.

Other New Business

The Council set a tentative meeting schedule as follows:

- April 11, 2011
- July 11, 2011
- October 17, 2011

The meeting was then adjourned.

**Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities
Proposed Minutes**

**April 11, 2011
1252 Foster Avenue
Hardison Building Auditorium
Nashville, Tennessee 37243**

Members of the Council in Attendance

David Blier

Dawn Bradley

Paula Brownyard, Chair

Cynthia Cheshier, Vice-Chair

Samuel Cole

Chip Fair

Jeff Finney

Janelle Glover

Kyle Hauth

Chantal Hess-Taylor

Mary Johnson

Catherine Knowles

Christine Lloyd-Burkes

Sebrena St. John

Shannon Taylor

Jim Topp

Members of the Council Not in Attendance

Kathleen Airhart

Beulah Oldham

Sharmila Patel

Cindy Storey

Tonya Watson

Darlene Walden

State Employees in Attendance

Lewis Butler, TN Department of Education/Division of College & Career Readiness (TDOE/DCCR)

Steve Dugger, TN Department of Children's Services

Joseph Fisher, TDOE/DCCR

Larry Greer, TDOE/DCCR

Jessica Harbison, TDOE/DCCR

Melanie Karsanac, TDOE/DCCR

Nan McKerley, TDOE/DCCR

Evans Murray, TN Office of Information Resources

Donna Parker, TDOE/DCCR

Visitors in Attendance

Susan Dalton, TN Education Association

Carrie Hobbs Guiden, The Arc of Tennessee

holly lu conant rees, Disability Coalition on Education

Christine Sartain, Parent

Ned Solomon, Disability Coalition on Education

Welcome

Paula Browyard, Chair, began the meeting by welcoming everyone. She then led the Council members and guests in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Acceptance of Agenda

The agenda was accepted as presented.

Approval of Minutes from October 11, 2010 Meeting

The January, 2011 meeting was cancelled due to weather conditions and conducted at a later date by phone. Without a quorum to vote on the minutes of the October, 2010 meeting, a vote was deferred. After briefly reviewing the minutes, the Council voted to accept them as presented.

Approval of Minutes from January 10, 2011 Meeting

The minutes of the January Meeting were also accepted as presented.

Report from the Chair

Paula congratulated Joseph Fisher, Assistant Commissioner of the Division of College and Career Readiness, and his staff in the Office of Special Education on the success of the 2011 Annual Special Education Conference. The conference was held in Nashville on February 23-25, 2011 and had approximately 2000 attendees from across the state present.

Paula went on to express the support of the Council for Mr. Fisher to continue his role as leader of the Office of Special Education. Newly appointed Commissioner of Education, Kevin Huffman, has stated that he does not plan to replace Mr. Fisher; however, the Council wanted their support of Mr. Fisher on record.

Public Input

There was no one present to address the Council.

2011-12 Council Goals Committee Selection

Paula volunteered to Chair this committee and asked for other volunteers. Mary Johnson, Chip Fair, Catherine Knowles and Samuel Cole all volunteered to assist.

2010-11 Annual Report Committee Selection

The Council reports its activities annually and Paula asked for volunteers to help draft this year's report. Cynthia Cheshier volunteered to Chair the committee and Sebrena St. John, Janelle Glover and Chantal Hess-Taylor also volunteered to assist.

Standards-Based IEPs

Donna Parker was introduced to present the work being done by the TDOE Office of Special Education to help local school districts develop and implement standards-based Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for their students with disabilities. Approximately three years ago, the TDOE began researching this issue by first reviewing a random sampling of IEPs from across the state to see how IEPs were being written. Almost every school district in Tennessee is using EasyIEP for its student data, which is loaded with every possible state curriculum standard. It was discovered that they were not always being used as thoughtfully as possible to provide the most effective instruction for students. The Office of Special Education also began working with the National Center for Educational Outcomes (NCEO), who helped in

the development of the 2% Modified Academics Achievement Standards (MAAS) Test and continue to assist states with focusing on standards-based IEPs, to develop training modules to help special educators think beyond simply writing goals and objectives. These modules first ask participants to consider what takes place in the general education classroom then help build, by layers, a more comprehensive plan that also allows for better tracking of student progress. The basis for these trainings was created by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), a nationwide network that helps develop educational policies and provide resource information, and, although the trainings apply to and can be used in any state, the State continues to adapt them specifically for Tennessee. As an added benefit, the trainings will also provide preemptive assistance in helping districts align their IEPs with the Common Core Standards passed by the State Board of Education, which are scheduled to be effective during the 2014-15 school year.

Promoting Response To Intervention (RTI) in Math and Reading

Melanie Karsanac, Director of Evaluation Services for the TDOE Office of Special Education, then provided an update on the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG). Response To Intervention is a framework being promoted by the TDOE to provide support to struggling students in the general education environment prior to a special education referral. The TDOE SPDG staff work with universities and advocacy groups across the state to provide hands-on training and professional development to local school districts, as well as information and training to parents for use in the home. They have also contracted with the IRIS Center to develop online RTI modules in Math and Reading. The Reading module is not complete; however, the module on high-quality Math instruction is already in place. It describes the components of high-quality Math instruction, what standards-based curriculum should look like and evidenced-based strategies for providing high-quality Math instruction. It also highlights effective strategies that teachers can use if they have students who are struggling, such as models for peer tutoring. These modules are linked to the US Department of Education website and can be used by any state across the country. The primary focus of the SPDG is professional development and the goal is to provide training to teachers, parents and other stakeholders throughout the state and improve outcomes for all students. To do so, these modules will be used as “Train the Trainer” sessions in which a district’s representative will make a commitment to attend the training then return home and train others in their district. The TDOE will provide follow-up support to ensure the accuracy and effectiveness of the subsequent trainings and to answer any questions.

Legislative Update

Bill Wilson, Staff Attorney for the Office of Special Education, was unable to attend the meeting. Chip Fair led the discussion on Legislative Updates in his stead. He began with The Special Needs Scholarship Act which proposes to create “scholarships for children served in special education programs in public schools beginning with the 2012-2013 school year.” This means eligible students could attend public schools outside their district of residence, schools run by another public entity or any private schools that provide education to elementary or secondary students, if such schools chose to participate in the scholarship program.

Other New Business

Jim Topp expressed concerns regarding Council member attendance at recent meetings. Paula agreed to research the issue and contact Council members who had not been attendance to encourage them to come to upcoming meetings.

Samuel Cole suggested sending a letter of support for Joseph Fisher to the new Commissioner of Education.

Sebrena St. John informed the Council of a letter she received from a parent of a child with Asperger's Syndrome who does not meet the current eligibility standards to receive special education services. Many students with Asperger's do not meet the criteria for Autism spectrum disorders based on the language skills component. Sebrena asked that the TDOE review these standards and help those children with Asperger's receive the services they need.

The Council set the following schedule for the next quarterly meetings:

- July 11, 2011
- October 24, 2011

(Please note that these dates are subject to change, if necessary. Please check the Council webpage at <http://www.tn.gov/education/speced/advisory.shtml> for updates regarding future meeting dates and other Council information.)

Adjourn

Hearing no other new business, the meeting was then adjourned.

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Paula Brownyard, Chair	Jackson
Cynthia Higginbotham, Vice-Chair	Knoxville
Kathleen Airhart	Cookeville
David Blier	Nashville
Dawn Bradley	Lebanon
Samuel Cole	Nashville
Chip Fair	Manchester
Jeff Finney	Elizabethton
Janelle Glover	Nashville
Kyle Hauth	Chattanooga
Chantal Hess-Taylor	Cordova
Mary Donnet Johnson	Knoxville
Catherine Knowles	Nashville
Flavenia Leaper	Memphis
Christene Lloyd-Burkes	Memphis
Beulah Oldham	Clarksville
Sharmila Patel	Nashville
Sebrena St. John	Limestone
Cindy Storey	Chattanooga
Shannon Taylor	Lexington
James Topp	Collierville
Darlene Walden	Denmark
Tonya Watson	Memphis

State of Tennessee

Phil Bredesen, Governor until January 2011

Bill Haslam, Governor beginning January 2011

Department of Education

Timothy K. Webb, Commissioner until October 2010

Bruce Opie, Commissioner, October 2010 – April 2011

Kevin Huffman, Commissioner beginning April 2011

Division of College and Career Readiness

Joseph E. Fisher, Assistant Commissioner

Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities

Paula Brownyard, Chair

Division Assistance to Council
Nan McKerley

2011